

## Passion of the Proper Name

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### ABSTRACT

In a collection of papers that are gathered under the name 'Derrida' we may take it as given that we know what is at stake, that from text to text one is engaged across the deployment of certain Derridean philosophemes, concepts, archives, positions, that would return us to a signature and the contexts of the events of its signing. And this would be, perhaps, more so in a commemorative volume or memorialising volume that is to mark a certain finality to the signature. Yet this very question of the 'living on' of the name, of a work or task of gathering and of a disseminating force of erasure has itself been a stuttering or haunting of the texts we name Derridean. This article approaches in a partial way a complex engagement by Derrida on that movement of a name from its 'nature' as familial bond to its becoming concept. Glas (1990) is a text, arranged in two (at least) parallel columns, one engaging GWF Hegel and the other Jean Genet. This article aims to ask, particularly in the contexts of Derrida's reading of Hegel, what is filiation such that we might have even commenced with writing on or with or for Derrida, such that this name becomes an horizontal disclosure for ..., such that we might say we have learnt something here, or even that we might have begun to call ourselves, perhaps, Derridean.

"The passion of the proper name: never to let itself be translated—according to its desire—but to suffer translation—which is intolerable to it" (Derrida, 1990: 20).

### A lapidary text

Why is the reconstitution of a Hegelian process written more easily in the future? Narrative ease? Pedagogical ease? Why does a philosopher so hard on narrative, on *récit*—he always opposes it to the concept—why does he incite us to use a kind of conceptual narration?

When Hegel is explained, it is always in a seminar and in telling students the history of the concept, the concept of history.

Rearing (the student), in French *élève*: that is the word I am treating here, like the thing, in every sense. Rearing (the student), *l'élève*. What is *élever* in general (*élevage*, *élévation*, *élevement*, breeding, elevation, education, upbringing)? Against what is rearing (*une élève*) practiced? To what is it answerable [*De quoi relève-t-elle*]? What does it relieve? What is *relever une élève*, relieving a rearing?

There is some lightness in all this. The dream of the eagle is alleviating. Wherever it (*ça*) falls (to the tomb). And is sublimating.

When a future is used for the student, it is a grammatical ruse of reason: the sense that reason will have meant (to say) is, in truth, the future perfect, the future anterior. The encyclopedic version of the greater Logic (circular pedagogy, for the student) narrates itself in the future perfect (Derrida, 1990: 15).

Would anything that appears between the covers of this volume concern Derrida? Between covers being held by someone, here and now as this is being read? We can imagine all of the proprietorial imprimaturs, standards, bearings that have exercised their rights of inspection, their incisions and extrusions such that there is something to be read concerning Derrida, all of the editorial decision concerning copy and the copy of copy. On what margins of filiation or affiliation would legitimacy's law be drawn? Could one say, in good faith and in truth, anything that came to mind, *anything*, when one is concerned of Derrida, thinking about him? Or would one, at the very least, have to show, demonstrate (or remonstrate) that one understands something of Derrida, that one is writing about Derrida, that something (at least) falls into the realm of a Derridean context, such that a reader in general is engaged in Derridean thinking, in a corpus or spirit of concerns, or perhaps, at the very least, that one is remembering Derrida, that he was?

But, then, in what I have asked here 'Derrida' may simply be an example of a more general question, a question in general of what it means to write about 'X' about any one (or thing) in general; 'Derrida' is a name that in what I am asking may be infinitely substitutable for any other name in general, perhaps pointing more to a question of the name itself, in itself, and what the name names: can this name, the one you read here, be indifferently read, as for example as an example of a name? Then we would be faced, indeed, with a difficult question, perhaps one that points to the difficulty of the question as such. What if this text here never stops citing the name 'Derrida' solely as an example of the name, not an exemplary example, (say for example of a philosopher who has interrogated the question of the name as such) but an example of a name that may be infinitely substituted? Would this still (or yet) be a text concerning Derrida? Or, perhaps to test the laws of legitimacy, of filiation, or at least those to be exercised by the editors, what if I substitute the name 'Hegel' for the name 'Derrida' in what has been written, what if, even while I was writing 'Derrida', I was thinking 'Hegel'? What if in a text supposedly bound to a commemoration or monument to Derrida, I was to systematically cross out every mention of Derrida and over-write it with Hegel? And in doing so, I may still be maintaining the name solely as example of any name (or thing) in general.

Should we suggest that what has been written so far is a little dim-witted, a little stupid, or should we prop it up with a standard-bearer such as the 'ruse of reason'? The 'ruse of reason', the 'cunning of reason', or what elsewhere may have been called 'destiny' overcomes or relieves the majestic tragedy of the impossible reconciliation of subjectivity and objectivity by burying the tragic, entombing it in the movement or monument of the name, from the familial to the universal. What can the name 'Derrida' name, save for the concept? And is one filial to the concept, to what is thought, or to what is actual? Or must what is actual be always already murdered in order to become concept, be already dead, already entombed in order to become truth, or if not truth then a question?

Already a family scene; but does not every proper name already name a family with its legitimate and illegitimate offspring, its immured realm of singularity and the opening or future to the universal precisely as the death of the family as such, the movement of the son from family to the state, and the movement of the actual to the concept? And with this movement there arises the question of education precisely as the elevation, the relieving of material existence to the universality of the concept: the parents die, inevitably. Yet remembered by their offspring, some for generations yet to come. Ideally, in perpetuity. In stone. But, then, would this not become a question of 'spirit' strictly in an Hegelian sense? Or a question of 'writing', strictly in a Derridean sense? Or some co-mingling: a 'spirit of writing' or a 'writing of spirit' as if one could never really keep the family names immured forever, as if one could ever keep the possessive 'of' contained within decidable borders? (I can hear the alarm bells that unleash the Derridean watch dogs, guardians of the concept, when I seem to suggest so simply the co-sanguinity of Hegel and Derrida: a certain

'glas' or 'klang' as perhaps a wake-up call, or a call-up, a roll-call to a wake. After all, they are both entombed separately *and* together).

### The son's education

The *right of individuals* to be *subjectively destined* [determined] to freedom is fulfilled ([hat seine] *Erfüllung*) when they belong to an actual ethical order (*sittlichen Wirklichkeit*), because their *conviction* of their freedom finds its *truth* in such an objective order (*Objectivität*), and it is in an ethical order (*Sittlichen*) that they are *actually* (*wirklich*) in possession (*besitzen*) of *their own* essence (*ihr eigenes Wesen*), their own *inner* universality. GWF Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (Derrida, 1990: 13).

I am grazing myself on *Glas*, as one would a knee [*je-nous*] (or both) on some stony outcrop: this filiation by Derrida to GWF Hegel and Jean Genet, two phalli, two columns, two sons who would here, phantasmically, be brothers: impossible brothers on a series of counts. *Glas*, a ringing, sounding, knelling clanging or resonating: a death rattle of sorts that puts into movement the family name as a movement towards ethical order in education.

What is 'family'? The *as such* of family, other than a raising to destruction, making the son like the father in education only that the son will come to leave the family? The family is always already in the tense, the tension, of the future anterior: it is what will come together in order to destroy itself, and precisely by elevation, propriation: appropriation in expropriation. And this would also be entirely according to the logic of an ethical order.

The family is the first moment of an ethical order constituted on love rather than on categorical imperative. The moral interdict of 'ought' as objective rule would itself need to be relieved, elevated in its remains by subjective freedom, or individual right. Or, rather, ethical order is the elevation of individual right as singular nature to that of moral injunctive as universal law: their filiation, their unity in difference. The family *is* the felt unity, the *inner* universality of ethical order in the education of the son. The father-son relation, or rather the relation as such that is *filiation*, and that coincides in the name, is this unity, is love. Yet this filiation will come to contradict itself, deny itself, deny the naturalness of feeling in the movement of the son from family to the state, from the singularity of inner universality to the ethical order of the state as the relieving, sublating or elevation of the opposition of the natural feeling of unity of the family and the universal law of civil society.

The state sublates these feelings constitutive of love to the rule of reason, to the concept. It will become, from the first to the last, our understanding of 'spirit' in its Hegelian sense, Hegelian spirit, if not also the spirit of Hegel (but would these three in their moments, in their movement not be in truth the actualisation of spirit, the escalation, uplifting, ascending of 'spirit' as such? We become 'Hegelians', synthesis of the singular and the universal but only to the extent that we love him, which is to say that we already understand our autonomy, our singular subjective freedom as a lack which will come to be made good precisely in what he will find to count in me: a kind of household economy of taking back only as much as I am not able to give. The immediacy of this irrational economy is precisely what gives way in the stepping in of reason, the concept, as such). What is the family?

The ethical (*sittliche*) substance, as containing independent self-consciousness united with its concept, is the *actual spirit* (*wirkliche Geist*) of a family and a people (Derrida, 1990: 14).

But, what is the concept? The other to nature, what differs from the thing is its concept. Spirit is not the idea, is not the concept, but actuality in the freeing of the freedom that it is. Whatever is, 'being', is what is closest to itself in that it is in its freedom to be. Spirit is the actualising of beings in that they are. In this spirit is not an ideal but the creating of a phenomenal experience in the freeing of freedom: "active, dynamic, negative", a "negating of all that threatens to destroy freedom" (24). We would here most radically oppose the 'concept' to 'spirit' just as the 'concept' is radically opposed to 'nature'. There is no freedom in nature in that nature, a natural thing, does not exist for

itself. Nature is in this sense necessity, and is opposed to freedom, as it is equally opposed to rationality or reason. The concept, in as much as it differs from the thing, is the relieving of the unreason of nature in the name, in the word. In this the concept controls:

In effect, in order to control maternal nature's hostility in her unleashed waters, she had to be thought, conceived, grasped. Being thought is being controlled. The concept marks the interruption of a first state of love. Her son says to nature: you don't love me, you don't want me to love you, I'm going to think you, conceive you, control you. The concept busies itself around a wound. "If man was to hold out against the aggressions of a nature now hostile, nature had to be mastered (*beherrscht*); and since the whole divided in two (*das entzweite Ganze*) can be divided only into idea and actuality (*in Idee und Wirklichkeit*), so also the supreme unity of mastery (*Beherrschung*) lies either in being-thought (*Gedachten*) or in being-actual (*Wirklichen*)" (Derrida, 1990: 38).

But this would also be control by the word or the name, control of the name as the controlling name, what the name names, precisely as the name-ability of naming. And this control would be nothing in itself save for making present nothing other than one further moment of activity in relieving the negativity of the concept. For the thing in its being, in its closeness to itself as its freedom, is neither its nature as subjective unity nor its concept as objective unity but its spirit as the unity of this singularity and universality; the elevation of the midpoint to monumental proportions as neither material nature nor conceptual idea, but what relates them, their true filiation, their spiritual exercise: the sign, signification as such; the spirit of writing; freedom of the concept as freedom from the concept. One leaves the family only in leaving it in ruins: rejection of a hostile mother; murder of a father; sublation of inner subjectivity into the outward universality of the state, being oneself only in name. Otherwise, one has never really left, has not thwarted the unfreedom of the naturalness of familial love, has not found one's being as that which is closest to itself in its freedom.

Education as elevation, cultivation and uplifting will always have been premised on this possibility of signification, on what it will come to show as its own possibility, its own moment of production and resolution. In producing, in signification as such, it tells what will become a recouping of this immediacy as other than it is, as if education contains all of the mysteries of temporality. Education is the murder of the *contents* of truth, what truth is the true of, in order that truth itself as the truth of the true may be revealed. "Truth—the past-thought—is always the death (relieved, erected, buried, unveiled, unbandaged) of what it is the truth of ... History is the process of murder" (32-33).

Education undoes itself as it moves along, resolves its own destruction, produces its own ruination precisely as being's moving closer to itself. Being's proximity is at the same time its disaster, its spirit, as the freeing of its freedom, is its entombing as its signification, its stony inscription. Being, in name only. But not the death of patrimony, the patriarchal, the pater himself. Hardly. For that one would need the actuality of the death of death, death of the spirit of death or the death of the death of spirit, or even the spiritualisation of spirit that would make *his* seed a dissemination rather than the forever grounded mid point, sign or signifying production, between father and son and would resolve education as producing an affirmation of an impossible continuity or continuation of an impossibility. But does it come down to this: something between signification and dissemination that would not simply be a repetition of Hegel, precisely at the moment when we wanted to separate ourselves from him in our difference from him: signification or dissemination? But would this not be just our unwanted recoup of Hegel, the moment we wanted to resolve *this* difference, this otherness to the other? As, for example, this Derrida as not being this Hegel? And, would we learn anything from Derrida or Hegel on this score, on how to avoid, or get out from Hegel? But how goes our learning here, a learning that would not also be a filiation, Derridean, Hegelian, both, or neither. Does it matter which, given that in truth truth's contents are only for smashing. At least *that* we learn from Hegel. And is there anything else to learn after that?

## Mother of God

Annunciation—what is to come—but in the sense of a conjuncture or constellation that already calls out before itself, ahead of itself, calls out what in the future will have come to be. In annunciation, the past will always have been in the future, just as the future will have been a past. But there is something else, other than the filiation of continuities. There is a caesura, a standstill, a pregnancy or pause in dialectics that could be said to unravel the negativity, the power of the negative, in dialectic's moment. This unravelling is a passive affirmation that cannot even be said to be opposed or even opposable to spirit's work of the negative. The being announced in annunciation forever remains in annunciation, in a not yet, a not yet being in being, a passivity as much to ideality, to the concept as to actuality, to spiritualisation, to being in closest proximity to its being free. No *Wirklichkeit*, no work of or in actuality, no labour of the concept elevating material nature. No affirmation in *this* sense. Then, in what possible sense? What other sense is there that would not immediately return us to dialectics? One begins to get a sense of the impossible brotherhood announced in *Glas*, the minglings of Hegel and Genet, the unravellings of one entangled in the other. It is the Genet of *Our Lady of the Flowers*, of the Immaculate Conception, the virgin mother, but also of more than one death rattle. A citation:

The executioner follows close behind me, Claire! The executioner's by my side ... They'll all be wearing crowns, flowers, oriflammes, banners. They'll toll the knell [*glas*]. The burial will unfold its pomp. It's beautiful, isn't it? ... The executioner's lulling me. I'm being acclaimed. I'm pale and I'm going to die. Jean Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers* (Derrida, 1990: 12-13).

The *glas's*, such as we shall have heard them, toll the end of signification, of sense, and of the signifier. Outside which, not to oppose the signature, still less to appose, affix it to that, we remark the signature through its name, in spite of what is thereby named, no longer signifies.

In no longer signifying, the signature no longer belongs to or comes from the order of signification, of the signified or signifier.

Thus, dingdong [*Donc*]—what emits a tolling of the knell, *un coup de glas*, is the fact that the flower, for example, in as much as it signs, no longer signifies anything.

Falls (to the tomb), remain(s) (Derrida, 1990: 31-32).

If for Hegel the *Aufhebung* is the work of suppression, negativity, relief, overcoming and remaining as dialectical movement, its labour is the work of spirit and spirit is filiation in the father-son. It opens in the suppression of animal 'pressures' [*Trieb*] to satisfaction, in the withholding of natural feelings, animal feelings, in the very possibility of a movement from the felt unity of family to an externalisation of unity in the state. If women are never to arrive at an externalisation of unity, if there is a standstill there, a caesura, a perpetual annunciation, it is because they, like animals have no need to suppress. Ironically, this failure at suppression marks itself as affirmation as such. Such affirmation is not so much subject to Hegelian dialectics, to the moments, labour, force or forceps of the *Aufhebung*, but more radically is the *Aufhebung* itself, dialecticity itself:

*Aufhebung* is a Christian daughter-mother. Or else: the daughter-mother, the Christian holy mother is named *Aufhebung*. She—the relief—is the contradiction and the satisfaction of the Christian desire or of what the Third Manuscript calls the "critical Christ": desire of/for maternity *and* of/for virginity (Derrida, 1990: 202-203).

It is his pressures that are relieved in the mother virgin, his suppressions of [natural] pressures, his animality sublated by her (who herself will never come to be subjected to sublation, to the possibility of an auto-relief, she who is relief itself and as such). Between mother and virgin, mother or virgin, both or neither, she shows herself: relief is signification or signification is relief. She is the appearance of signification, the showing of signification as such, that there is signification, which would in and for itself be the fain of signification, its appearance and also its 'ground' awaiting its monumental erections. And we would recognise that here signification and dissemination would not stand opposed, one to the other, like two stele, two columns, two phalli or brothers. It is no longer a question of standing or lying down, of the stiff and the limpid. It is barely a question at all,

particularly if every question *qua* question remains a question of spirit, which amounts to the same thing, a question of the name:

I do not know if I have sought to understand him. But if he thought I had understood him, he would not support it, or rather he would like not to support it. What a scene. He would not support what he likes to do, himself. He would feel himself already entwined. Like a column, in a cemetery, eaten by an ivy, a parasite that arrived too late.

I wormed my way in as a third party, between his mother and himself. I gave him/her. I squealed on him/her. I made the blood [*sang*] speak (Derrida, 1990: 203).

## References

Derrida, J. (1990). *Glas* (John P. Leavey, Jr., Trans.). Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press.